

Power of word comes through true coverage of reality

Minsk hosts 6th Belarus International Media Forum

By Victor Mikhailov

The *Partnership for the Future: Patriotism, Spirituality, Unity* forum was symbolic in being organised on the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. Its title reflects the depth of the lessons learned from perhaps the most tragic pages of the 20th century. Of course, the media plays a significant role in helping us understand events. Meanwhile, another date is in the air: the 20th anniversary of the foundation of the CIS.

The Belarus International Media Forum is no longer a mere club of professionals. Every year, more countries attend. This time, Minsk welcomed over 80 journalists from 21 countries. The First Deputy Information Minister, Lilia Ananich, is proud of our information field, which is 'developing dynamically, creating a unique information bridge between various countries and journalistic communities.'

This year, delegations from Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Germany, France, Italy, China, Israel, the USA, Turkey and CIS states attended the Minsk event, with discussions proving vigorous at a plenary session hosted by the National Library. Master classes offered by leading Belarusian and foreign journalists were no less interesting, with speeches organised at the Summer School of Journalism (at the Belarusian State University's Institute of Journalism).

The Media Forum — held in Belarus — is certainly unique; no other similar event is organised in the CIS. Accordingly, it arouses huge interest and guests often propose their own vision for the programme's expansion. This year, some participants expressed their desire to visit agricultural and industrial enterprises — a desire then



Participants of Summer School of Journalism, held within 6th Belarus International Media Forum

satisfied by the event's organisers.

Leonid Rechitsky, the Secretary at the Russian Union of Journalists, was taking part in the Minsk Forum for the first time and considers its organisation to be quite interesting. Where else if not here is it possible to attend intensive master classes for serious, professional journalists, who pursue their job on an international scale? It's always intriguing to hear the opinion of colleagues, especially considering the unusual times we live in. Mr. Rachitsky notes that 'it's hard for journalists to work now' due to the high level of mistrust of the media. Of course, objective reasons exist for this situation but journalists also share responsibility. "Globalisation means that information dissemination must be objective," says Mr. Rachitsky.

The Deputy Editor-in-Chief of

Bakinsky Rabochy (Baku Worker) newspaper, Ilgar Ismailov, tells us that this is his second time at the event, which he believes is especially interesting this year. "It's necessary to see for yourself how Belarus is now," he emphasises. On hearing the Azerbaijani journalist's observations, you receive an objective view. "On the streets, there are thousands of cars, with hardly any produced in the former Soviet Union. This speaks much of the standard of living," he notes. Mr. Ismailov enumerates other bright examples, concluding, "Problems occur everywhere, from time to time. Everything cannot go smoothly forever. Belarus is a self-sufficient country, producing everything domestically. As regards energy resources, you are lacking but Azerbaijan will help you. It's already assisting," Mr. Ismailov wishes his

colleagues to be objective in covering news on Belarus: unbiased and lacking political colour.

Natalia Uzun, Editor-in-Chief of *Moldavskie Vedomosti (Moldova News)* is also keen to be objective, saying, "I was surprised to know that Belarus has the Institute of Journalism. Chisinau and many other countries lack such fundamental journalistic training. They see journalism as an applied sphere while, here, multi-sided and fundamental knowledge is offered. This is very interesting." Speaking of the usefulness of exchanging professional views, she notes, "We are creating an open venue for information exchange, drawing a real picture of our states' development. By communicating, we help each other to understand our problems and achievements — sometimes doing this even

better than politicians."

Speaking at a plenary session of Belarus' *Partnership for the Future: Patriotism, Spirituality, Unity* International Media Forum, Vladimir Makei, the Head of the Presidential Administration of Belarus, stressed that the media shouldn't be used as a political tool.

"Every day, we see that, despite elegant declarations, the modern media is unfortunately, becoming an instrument used by some political and business figures for their own ends. Instead of providing objective information and being an integral part of the checks and balances system, the media often serve to promote political ideas and become a means of manipulating public opinion," believes Mr. Makei. He especially asked media forum participants to beware of new information mediums — since these can be used to manipulate and control people's consciousness. He urged each journalist to be aware of the power of words and remain an impartial source of information. "I am convinced that the talented, fair and powerful word of a journalist should be ethical and legally accurate," noted Mr. Makei.

He believes that we should set boundaries for what we view as reasonable and acceptable, reconciling the interests of a narrow circle with those of wider society. When strongly dependent on the ruling elite, agendas can be formed by politicians and financial corporations; a journalist has the right to correct these, reminding the public of morality and justice. Delivering information about ideals and culture, the media should help sweep away ignorance and misunderstanding, promoting panhuman solidarity and preservation of global security.

Jubilee of large 'diamond'

New National Library building celebrates its fifth birthday

Belarus' largest 'diamond' has celebrated its fifth jubilee, boasting significant results: about 5m people have visited the site since its opening, in addition to over 7m virtual visits. Over 100 readers subscribe to the National Library daily, with about 10,000 books loaned every day. At present, the total number of readers stands at 170,000.

On the jubilee day, visitors to the National Library were granted free Internet use. In addition, they could copy e-information on removable media and leave their children in a supervised crèche. Those who subscribed to the library's services on June 16th were also offered an excursion through the building.

The National Library of Belarus is the biggest educational, information and cultural centre in the country, being a library network node and the largest universal scientific library in the Republic. It is a leading establishment in the field of bibliography and library and book studies.



National Library building is among symbols of Belarusian capital

Path to future

By Vyacheslav Belynichev

Demographic Security National Programme budget won't be cut

Among other things, the *Demographic Security* National Programme aims to raise maternity allowances, helping larger families pay for mortgages on property and granting privileged loans to those wishing to undergo in vitro fertilisation. The Government recently studied the document and the Presidium gave its general approval.

While other budgetary areas are cut severely, the demographic programme could gain extra financing. "Some issues cannot be scrimped upon, as this can harm the country," asserts the Labour and Social Protection Minister, Marianna Shchetkina. It's been decided that financing will be annually specified for certain purposes, and in

full volume. The programme takes into consideration the forecasts for the birth rate and mortality. According to Ms. Shchetkina, the average life expectancy among Belarusians should rise to 72-73 years over the coming five years.

About 16 percent of Belarusian couples are infertile, with 60 percent being female and 40 percent male. However, many are keen to take advantage of the latest reproductive technologies in gaining a baby, with 1,500 in vitro fertilisation operations conducted in Belarus annually. More are needed, with the cost of the procedure limiting numbers at present. About two-thirds of the total are conducted privately, at a high price, deterring many couples from their dream. One of the national programme's proposals envisages privileged terms for loans used for this purpose.